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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2366 (2017), in which the Council requested that, within 45 days of the adoption of the resolution, I present detailed recommendations regarding the size, operational aspects and mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, consistent with the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) (see S/2017/272, annex II). It also follows my report to the Council on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, dated 23 June 2017 (S/2017/539).

II. Mandate

2. The Final Agreement, which was signed on 24 November 2016, provided for the establishment of a second special political mission that would begin operations upon completion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which was given responsibility for the verification of the Agreement between the Government and FARC-EP on the Bilateral and Definitive Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities and Laying Down of Arms (Ceasefire Agreement). Section 6.3.3 of the Final Agreement specifies that the second United Nations mission should be responsible for the verification of the reintegration of FARC-EP members into political, economic and social life; the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures; and comprehensive security and protection programmes for communities and organizations in the territories.

3. On 5 June 2017, in identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, formally requested, on behalf of the Government and FARC-EP, the establishment of the second mission by 10 July 2017 (see S/2017/481, annex). In his letter, the President emphasized that the support of the international community, in particular through the United Nations Mission in Colombia, had been instrumental in ensuring full compliance with the Ceasefire Agreement. The letters outlined the proposed mandate for the second mission in accordance with section 6.3.3 of the Final Agreement. It also requested that the second mission operate for a period of three years, renewable if necessary, and specified that the mission would be of a political nature and encompass both regional and local verification.

4. On 9 June 2017, in a letter addressed to me, the President of the Security Council requested that I provide the Council with initial recommendations for the establishment of the second political mission. In response, in my report to the Council of 23 June (S/2017/539), I recommended that the Council respond favourably to the parties' request. I also specified that the ability of the United Nations to meet the parties' request would be facilitated if the Council authorized me to initiate preparations for the second mission immediately. With that authority, I would undertake an integrated planning process for the second mission and present detailed proposals regarding the mission's functions, size, structure and operational aspects, informed by practical experience on the ground. I also noted that, until such time as the second mission could be fully established, the United Nations Mission in Colombia was in a position, if so authorized by the Council, to initiate some tasks of the second mandate on a provisional basis, within available resources and from its current 9 regional and 26 local headquarters, pending further assessment to determine the requirements for full implementation.

5. On 10 July 2017, by its resolution 2366 (2017), the Security Council established the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (the Verification Mission) for an initial period of 12 months and decided that it should begin all verification activities on 26 September, immediately after completion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. The resolution specifies that the Verification Mission should verify implementation by the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP of sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the Final Agreement, including the political, economic and social reintegration of FARC-EP and the implementation of personal and collective security guarantees and of comprehensive programmes on security and protection measures for communities and organizations in the territories, as well as carrying out the required regional and local verification. In the resolution, the Council requested that I report to it every 90 days on the implementation of the mandate of the Verification Mission. The Council also directed the United Nations Mission in Colombia to begin provisional work anticipated by the Verification Mission, as set out in my report of 23 June, within its current configuration and capacity.

III. Mission tasks

6. The tasks for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia will be related exclusively to verification, as opposed to those of the current Mission, which included the coordination of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism as well as operational tasks, such as the recently concluded destruction of unstable armaments and the extraction of weapons containers, as well as the ongoing neutralization of weapons. The commitments to reintegration and security guarantees that the new Mission will be required to verify are articulated in detail in sections 3.2 and 3.4 of the Final Agreement.

Verification of political, economic and social reintegration

7. The new Mission will be charged with verifying commitments regarding the political and socioeconomic reintegration of FARC-EP members. Section 3.2 of the Final Agreement outlines the context and spirit in which the reintegration process must be understood:

> Laying the foundations for building a stable and lasting peace requires the effective reintegration of FARC-EP into the country's social, economic and political life. The reintegration process confirms the commitment of FARC-EP to contribute to the ending of the armed conflict, to become a legal political entity and contribute decisively to the consolidation of national reconciliation,

coexistence and guarantees of non-repetition, and to transform the conditions that allowed violence across the country to break out and persist.

8. With regard to political reintegration, the Final Agreement provides that the transition of FARC-EP from an armed organization into a new legal political party or movement, which has rights and which fulfils the obligations and duties inherent to constitutional order, is an essential condition for ending the armed conflict, building a stable and lasting peace and, in general, for strengthening democracy in Colombia. Guarantees for the new political movement or party that emerges from the transition of FARC-EP into a legal entity taking part in political life include the right to: register with and be recognized by the National Electoral Council; technical assistance, operational funding and support; assured access and funding for participation in the 2018 and 2022 elections; access to the media; and special security guarantees for the movement and its leaders. It also includes guarantees regarding political representation, on a temporary basis, for the new movement or party in the national Congress during two constitutional periods, starting in 2018, and a temporary non-voting delegate on the National Electoral Council.

9. The Final Agreement also outlines the general philosophy of the process of socioeconomic reintegration, which should be aimed at strengthening the social fabric across the country, coexistence and reconciliation among its inhabitants and developing and deploying socially productive activities and local democracy. A road map agreed to by the parties on 29 May 2017 stressed that socioeconomic reintegration should be community based. The Final Agreement also points out that the process of reintegration should have, in all its aspects, a differentiated approach, with an emphasis on the rights of women.

10. A number of commitments relating to socioeconomic reintegration have already been implemented, including the establishment of the National Reintegration Council; the legal establishment of a social and economic solidarity organization (Ecomun) for the purpose of the productive reintegration of FARC-EP; the creation of a centre for political thought and education; the transformation of the Colombian Agency for Reintegration into the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization; a presidential decree on socioeconomic reintegration; and a social and economic census of FARC-EP members. Another set of commitments are currently being implemented, including the transition to legal status of former FARC-EP fighters and militias; the reintegration of minors who have left FARC-EP camps; access to bank accounts for FARC-EP members; and training and educational activities.

11. Further economic and social reintegration measures that require verification include the identification and implementation of sustainable, socially productive projects and programmes; a fund for reintegration projects that will be set up through Ecomun; the availability of funds for individual projects; and a number of measures under the rubric of "guarantees for sustainable social and economic reintegration". The latter includes provisions for a basic income for former FARC-EP members for a period of 24 months, a normalization allowance, social security payments and social programmes. It should be noted that, for all the above activities, the Final Agreement allows for the provision of economic support from the private sector and foundations, as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation, without prejudice to funds dedicated to those activities by the Government.

Verification of security guarantees

12. Section 3.4 of the Final Agreement comprises a broad range of measures aimed at enhancing the security of the citizens of Colombia in the aftermath of the conflict between the State and FARC-EP in a context where, notwithstanding the ceasefire, the laying down of weapons by FARC-EP and its conversion into a

peaceful political organization, illegal groups and entrenched patterns of violence continue to exist, affecting in particular the rural areas and communities that have suffered most from decades of violence. The security measures are consistent with the overall orientation of the Final Agreement, which, in order to secure lasting peace, focuses peace consolidation efforts on the stabilization of rural areas of the country, in particular in poor and extremely poor areas that were significantly impacted by the conflict, that have weak State institutions and where illicit crops are cultivated and there are other forms of illegal economic activity.

13. The security guarantees included in section 3.4 of the Final Agreement can be categorized into four broad areas: (a) the establishment of national bodies; (b) specific measures for personal and collective security, (c) a comprehensive security system for the exercise of politics, aimed especially at the political opposition; and (d) a comprehensive security and protection programme for the communities and organizations in areas most affected by the conflict.

14. At the national level, the National Commission on Security Guarantees has already been established. This body, chaired at the highest levels, has wide-ranging responsibilities associated with the planning, monitoring and cross-sector coordination of measures to dismantle organizations responsible for attacks on human rights advocates, social movements, political movements and those taking part in the implementation of the peace process. The Commission has contributed to the establishment of the legal framework for enhanced security guarantees, including a legal decree for the establishment of a special investigation unit within the Office of the Attorney General and a programme on reconciliation, coexistence and prevention of stigmatization.

15. Other relevant national bodies that have already been established include the Police Elite Corps, which will operate primarily in areas most affected by the conflict to combat criminal organizations; the Technical Committee on Security and Protection, with the participation of members of the Government and FARC-EP; the Sub-Directorate of the National Protection Unit; and the Security and Protection Corps, a body of mixed composition that includes former members of FARC-EP who have received appropriate training and equipment.

16. A number of measures related to the comprehensive security system for the exercise of politics have already been or being taken, including guarantees for the security of political parties and movements, as well as for members of the new party or movement that will emerge from the transition of FARC-EP. Pending tasks include the strengthening of the early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman and the programmes to support reconciliation, coexistence and prevention of political stigmatization.

17. A centrepiece of the set of security guarantees is the comprehensive security and protection programme for communities and organizations, highlighted in the letter of the President of Colombia. This programme, which includes a broad range of physical protection, education and awareness-raising measures to support the groups, organizations and people most at risk, also contains specific measures for the protection and participation of women.

IV. Deployment, staffing and structure

18. On the basis of the mandate set out in resolution 2366 (2017), a number of considerations have been taken into account and consultations have been held with the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP in order to ensure the best possible design for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Discussions with

the Government involved entities with which the new Mission will be called upon to cooperate most closely in carrying out its mandate, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Attorney General, the national police and the armed forces. As part of those consultations, on 14 August 2017, my Special Representative for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia sent a letter outlining the concept that would guide verification, dispute resolution and confidence-building for the new Mission to the members of the Commission for Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the National Reintegration Council and the National Commission for Security Guarantees, the three entities identified as key interlocutors in resolution 2366 (2017). The current Mission has also taken stock of the practical experience gained since 10 July with the initial verification of reintegration and security guarantees within its current configuration and capacity. In addition, an integrated planning process between the current Mission and the United Nations country team has been carried out with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication in the implementation of their respective mandates. Based on these considerations, I am in a position to make the following recommendations on the size and operational aspects of the Verification Mission.

A. Geographical deployment

19. In keeping with the need for verification to be local and regional, as requested in the letter of the President of Colombia (S/2017/481, annex) and in resolution 2366 (2017), and to design the most effective deployment for the Verification Mission, I have considered the lessons learned from the challenges encountered during the deployment of the current Mission as well as the following parameters:

(a) The need to retain a presence in or near the 26 territorial areas for training and reintegration, which were fully established as agreed by the parties on 15 August 2017, where the members of FARC-EP are in the process of reintegration and where guarantees are being provided for their security. With regard to the latter, the Government has already determined the combination of police and military forces required to ensure the protection of the territorial areas for training and reintegration, depending on the degree of risk present in each area. This arrangement will also provide the security environment needed for the activities of the Verification Mission;

(b) The need to establish a presence in locations that have been designated as priorities for the provision of security and protection of communities, in view of the risk factors present in those areas. They encompass some 170 municipalities, which the national police and the armed forces have identified in their respective stabilization plans, the Institutional Strategic Plan: Safe and Peaceful Communities 2015-2018 and the Strategic Military Plan for Stabilization and Consolidation "Victory". The deployments will accompany the Government's overall peace consolidation programme, which includes a broader presence of civilian institutions, the provision of basic goods and services, rural development initiatives and illicit crop substitution programmes. Many of those municipalities can be accessed by verification teams operating from the 26 territorial areas for training and reintegration mentioned above, as well as from the 9 regional offices where the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism is currently deployed. However, additional small sub-offices will need to be established to ensure that the new Mission can engage with the most vulnerable communities and liaise effectively with the military and police units responsible for protection in those areas;

(c) The need to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, co-location between the new Mission and the United Nations country team, so as to maximize collaboration between the Mission and the United Nations entities in Colombia;

(d) The need to redeploy the staff of several regional offices, whose locations do not allow them to provide the best possible support to local verification activities.

20. Based on these considerations, the new Mission would retain essentially the same geographical deployment as the current Mission, namely, 1 Mission headquarters office in Bogota, 9 regional offices and 26 local teams, with the latter coinciding with the territorial areas for training and reintegration with the following modifications: (a) the Bucaramanga regional office would be transferred to Cúcuta (department of Norte de Santander), where it would be better placed to support local teams in the area, and where United Nations entities are also present; (b) a new regional office would be established in Pasto (department of Nariño) given that the current Popayán regional office is unable, owing to distance, to adequately support the local teams in Nariño, and given that United Nations entities are also present in Pasto; and (c) the establishment of small sub-offices at seven locations: Montería (department of Córdoba); Puerto Rico (department of Meta); Arauca (department of Arauca); Mocoa (department of Putumayo); Apartadó (department of Antioquia); Buenaventura (department of Valle del Cauca); and Barrancabermeja (department of Santander). This geographical deployment would enable the new Mission to cover the priority areas for the implementation of its mandate in relation to reintegration and security guarantees. It would also allow for co-location of and close coordination among the Verification Mission and 9 of the 13 local coordination teams deployed by the United Nations country team in Colombia.

B. Staffing

21. The majority of the staff of the Verification Mission will be civilians, working in teams with unarmed, non-uniformed international observers. The presence of combined teams at the local, regional and national levels will provide the Mission with the set of skills and knowledge necessary to address both the security and non-security matters pertaining to its mandate and to engage effectively with its civilian, military and police counterparts. To the extent possible, civilian staff and observers will transfer from the current Mission to the Verification Mission, in order to give the latter the benefit of in-depth experience with the peace process and the opportunity to maintain and build upon well-established professional relationships. The Verification Mission will seek to employ suitably experienced national staff in as many roles as possible, given the availability of highly qualified Colombians in the functional and thematic areas covered.

22. Local teams in the territorial areas for training and reintegration and sub-offices will be small and composed of United Nations civilian personnel and observers with a balance of military and police expertise. The core staff of the regional offices will be larger, consisting of United Nations civilian staff and observers, providing verification, public information, liaison, mission support and security capabilities. Depending on the region, the regional offices will have additional small teams, identical to the local teams in the territorial areas for training and reintegration, which will be able to travel, as required, to areas without a permanent presence where reintegration and security and protection programmes for the communities and organizations are being implemented.

C. Structure

23. The Verification Mission will be led by my Special Representative for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, who will exercise full political and operational responsibility for the Mission. In order to enable the Mission to effectively fulfil its mandate, my Special Representative will be assisted by a Deputy Special Representative, whose primary role will be to supervise the Mission's field presence, and a Chief of Staff, whose role will be to ensure that the Mission's headquarters, in Bogota, functions in an efficient and coordinated manner.

24. The Office of the Special Representative will be composed of a Senior Military Adviser and a Senior Police Adviser, a public information office, a legal affairs section, an analysis and reporting unit (including a fusion cell where information from the various components will be processed) and an operations and planning section.

25. The Verification Mission will have four components, following a structure similar to that of the current Mission: a verification component, a mission support component, a field coordination component and a security component. The verification, mission support and security components will report to the Special Representative. The field coordination component will report to the Deputy Special Representative, whose office will also include a conduct and discipline team and a training unit.

Verification component

26. The verification component will: (a) collect and process observations carried out by the teams deployed at the local, sub-office and regional levels; (b) engage with the two parties, as required, based on the results of verification, in particular with those national agencies responsible for security guarantees and reintegration; (c) prepare inputs for my reports to the Security Council; and (d) work closely with the Commission for Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the National Reintegration Council and the National Commission for Security Guarantees, as requested by the Security Council and the parties. The interaction with these bodies will be focused on sharing information gathered in the process of verification, discussing the assessment by the Verification Mission of progress with regard to reintegration and security guarantees, and formulating observations and recommendations as required.

27. The two sections within the verification component, one focused on reintegration and the other on security guarantees, will each be composed of a small team with expertise in the respective subject matter. A small group of advisers with expertise in gender issues, child protection, ethnic issues and other cross-cutting themes will support both verification sections. These advisers will be selected in close consultation with relevant members of the United Nations country team and will constitute a key linkage with the relevant United Nations entities, with a view to enhancing coordination.

Field coordination component

28. As amply demonstrated by the experience of the current Mission, the Verification Mission will require very close substantive, operational, logistical and security coordination at the national, regional and local levels. Doing so will continue to be a significant management challenge owing to the number and remoteness of locations in which the new Mission will operate.

29. In order to ensure effective coordination and synchronized implementation across the country, the Verification Mission will put in place a robust field coordination structure. Uninterrupted information flow and timely feedback from Mission headquarters and across regional offices will be of particular importance for the purpose of verification. The field coordination component, under the leadership of the Deputy Special Representative, will be in permanent contact with the heads of the regional offices to monitor the situation at the regional and local levels and ensure that issues of concern are raised quickly with senior Mission leadership and responded to in a timely and effective manner, and that the verification, mission support and security sides of the Mission work seamlessly in support of the Mission's operations in the field. The leadership of the field coordination component will travel extensively throughout the country to ensure regular engagement with Mission staff and regional and local authorities. The field coordination component will be in a position to identify trends across the Mission's field presence, implement solutions and ensure that best practices from different locations are shared across the Mission. Importantly, the field coordination component will oversee a 24-hour "operations room" to monitor and track all the Mission's field activities and ensure that the Mission responds immediately and in a unified and coordinated manner to emerging situations.

Mission support component

30. Since the Verification Mission will be solely responsible for the provision of the full range of support services to all its locations and personnel, a task that, with respect to the current Mission, has been shared with the Government of Colombia, a significant shift in the mission support approach will be required. Moreover, the logistical complexity of supporting verification activities over long distances and in inhospitable terrain will only increase as the new Mission expands its presence to new areas of the country.

31. Wherever possible, the Verification Mission will build upon existing contracts and agreements, adapting them where necessary, or will seek rapidly implementable "turnkey" solutions to meet its support needs. The current Mission is already in the process of undertaking detailed cost-benefit analyses of the most efficient modalities for ground and air transportation. Regarding the latter, the new Mission will maintain the current internationally provided aviation capabilities in the short term while working closely with national and regional aviation authorities and providers to fulfil United Nations certification requirements, allowing a transition from a dedicated to a stand-by aviation capability during the current mandate period.

32. The current Mission is already working closely with United Nations entities on operational and logistical aspects. To the extent possible, the Verification Mission will co-locate with members of the United Nations country team to maximize cost efficiencies and benefit from enhanced coordination through co-location. At the local level, the current Mission has and will continue to work closely with both the Government and FARC-EP to ensure that the local sites of the new Mission will be in close proximity to areas where verification will be required and be deployed in a manner that is aligned with the logistical and security deployment plans of the Government. At local sites, emphasis will be on the immediacy of service provision, acceptance by local communities, cost, sustainability and environmental impact. In this latter respect, the mission support component will have staff devoted to ensuring that the new Mission operates in an environmentally sustainable manner, in accordance with the "Greening the Blue" initiative.

Security component

33. The Government of Colombia has overall responsibility for the safety and security of all United Nations personnel in Colombia. Working closely with the national police and associated security agencies, the Department of Safety and Security will put in place a system that balances the requirement to effectively implement the mandate of the Verification Mission with the need to do so in a safe and secure manner.

34. In order to improve service, operational and financial efficiency, the United Nations security management system in Colombia will operate in a unified manner, with a single structure responsible for safety and security services to both the Verification Mission and the United Nations country team. This approach will enable the Mission to benefit from support in areas such as security analysis and assessments, investigations, 24-hour radio contact, access control, training, staff tracking, fire safety, stress counselling and security advice.

35. At the national level, the Chief Security Adviser will act as the principal security adviser to the designated official and as the Chief Security Officer of the Verification Mission, directly supporting the Special Representative in the provision of security support and advice. The Mission will deploy security staff at the regional level and appoint security focal points at the local level. Those staff members will support the provision of appropriate safety and security measures in the Mission's field locations. Mission safety and security staff will participate in information fusion cells at the national and regional levels, working closely with the staff of the Mission and United Nations county team, and, where applicable, external partners, to produce multisource security-related analysis.

Observers

36. As outlined above, unarmed, non-uniformed international observers will serve with civilian staff in combined teams, at the local, sub-office, regional and national levels. At the regional level, the most senior observer will serve as an adviser to the head of office on police and military matters.

37. Observers will be selected on the basis of criteria designed to ensure the most effective implementation of the mandate. The criteria include prior experience with verification mandates, knowledge of the issues under verification, gender balance, regional representation and adherence to United Nations values and standards. Owing to the fact that both the national police and the armed forces will play a role in the provision of security and protection to communities, the Verification Mission will seek to select and deploy an equal number of observers from the military and police services.

38. In addition to the provision of expert advice to the Special Representative, the most senior observers in the Verification Mission, in their respective capacities as the ranking police and military officer serving with the United Nations in Colombia, will also undertake important administrative and welfare functions. A small number of observers will be employed at Mission headquarters to handle administrative and welfare functions.

39. Having a wide range of countries contribute observers to the United Nations Mission in Colombia has proved to be an asset to its effectiveness and credibility. As such, all countries contributing to the current Mission, in particular non-neighbouring countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, will be invited to continue to contribute observers to the Verification Mission. In order to ensure a seamless transition, countries that have contributed observers will be requested to transfer a certain number of observers from the current Mission to the new Mission.

Representation of women

40. The commitment of the current Mission to increasing the number of women serving in all functions, positions and geographical locations has been an important factor contributing to its success. The Verification Mission will maintain this commitment through the prioritized recruitment of qualified female applicants and close engagement with countries that contribute observers to encourage the nomination of female observers. Indeed, the need to ensure a high level of female representation is borne out by the fact that nearly a quarter of all former members of FARC-EP in the process of reintegration are female. The experience of previous reintegration processes, both in Colombia and beyond, has confirmed the importance of considering the specific capacities and needs of women in such dynamics.

Coordination with the United Nations country team

41. In its resolution 2366 (2017), the Security Council requested that the Verification Mission work in coordination with members of the United Nations country team in Colombia in accordance with their respective mandates. The Verification Mission will deepen the already highly developed relationship between the current Mission and members of the United Nations country team and establish strong coordination arrangements in order to ensure coherence in United Nations support for the implementation of the Final Agreement, given that various entities of the United Nations system have been called upon to provide such support and/or have related protection or verification mandates. As noted above, the current Mission, the members of the United Nations country team and the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Colombia have jointly undertaken an integrated planning process. That process has resulted in the following outcomes:

(a) The development of a shared vision on how the United Nations can contribute to sustainable peace and assist the parties in the implementation of their commitments; and the decision to establish a common information system to ensure appropriate follow-up of implementation and verification activities;

(b) The establishment of new coordination arrangements, including a permanent coordination group co-chaired by the Verification Mission and the Office of the Resident Coordinator, as well as two working groups, focusing on security guarantees and reintegration, respectively, with the participation of the Verification Mission and relevant United Nations entities. This will ensure full consistency and effective coordination in the implementation and verification activities of the United Nations entities in Colombia;

(c) A modified geographical deployment of the Verification Mission so as to ensure co-location between the Mission and 9 of the 13 existing local coordination teams. This will ensure better coordination and allow for the optimum use of resources;

(d) Given the importance of the human rights dimension for peace implementation in general and for the mandate of the Verification Mission in particular, the Mission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will have specific arrangements for coordination with a view to ensuring complementarity in the implementation of their respective mandates.

Overall resources

42. Considering the detailed analysis and planning outlined above, the Verification Mission will be smaller overall than the current Mission, while maintaining the required local and regional presence. In order to be able to effectively and efficiently implement the mandate set out in resolution 2366 (2017), the Verification Mission will require approximately 120 unarmed international observers, as well as an appropriate civilian component, as to be decided by the General Assembly in the context of its consideration of the Mission's budget.

V. Observations

43. With the consolidation of the ceasefire and the finalization of the laying down of weapons by FARC-EP, the implementation of the commitments related to the Ceasefire Agreement set out in item 3.1 of the Final Agreement is nearing completion, with the support of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. The Government of Colombia and FARC-EP have requested that, in the wake of this remarkable success, the United Nations undertake verification of the implementation of the reintegration of FARC-EP members and the establishment of security for all in the areas most affected by the five decade-long conflict.

44. From the outset of the negotiations, the parties agreed that bringing an end to the conflict would be an integral and simultaneous process. As mentioned in the present report, since the signing of the Final Agreement, a number of mechanisms and measures have been put in place with regard to both the reintegration of FARC-EP members and the implementation of security guarantees. I have informed the Security Council regularly on several of these developments as part of my reports on the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

45. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, established pursuant to Council resolution 2366 (2017), will begin operations on 26 September 2017. The Mission will aim to consolidate the peace process and assist the parties in their efforts to ensure that full social, economic and political reintegration of FARC-EP members is achieved in the shortest time possible and that the rural areas of Colombia hardest hit by the conflict can recover the peace and security to which their communities aspire.

46. Pursuant to resolution 2366 (2017), the United Nations Mission in Colombia, within its current configuration and capacity, has begun some of the provisional work anticipated by the Verification Mission. That work has informed the conclusions of the present report and will also help to ensure a seamless transition from the current Mission to the new one. In addition, it is important to note the extensive consultations that my Special Representative and the current Mission have undertaken with both parties regarding the design, structure and vision for the Verification Mission.

47. I am also highly encouraged by the close coordination and interaction between the current Mission and the United Nations country team, in particular in the integrated planning process that led to many of the recommendations outlined in the present report. The Verification Mission will continue to build on the coordination arrangements with members of the United Nations country team, both in Bogota and at the local level, in order to maximize efficiency and ensure a "whole-of-United Nations" approach. The new Mission will also rely on the expertise of United Nations entities in key thematic areas, including gender, child protection, human rights and ethnic and indigenous issues.

48. One important difference between the current Mission and the new Mission is that the cost-sharing agreements with the Government of Colombia will no longer be applicable, and the Verification Mission will be responsible for providing all support services for its personnel, for which it will require a robust mission support component. To maximize efficiency and ensure a seamless transition, the Verification Mission will build upon existing contracts and arrangements with key providers of the range of mission support assets.

49. While the Verification Mission and the current Mission differ in several respects, they also have key features in common. First, in their areas of deployment, which respond to the need to be present in the rural areas most affected by the

conflict, which are also the areas where the FARC-EP reintegration will take place. Second, in their composition, which include civilian staff and observers with military and police backgrounds, in recognition that both civilian institutions and security forces have key roles to play in the consolidation of peace.

50. In addition the two missions also share a common vision of verification. In keeping with the current Mission, the Verification Mission will maintain close ties at all levels with institutions in charge of implementation and with the beneficiaries of reintegration measures and security guarantees. In particular, the presence of mixed civilian-observer verification teams at the local level must be a tool for the early resolution of differences that inevitably emerge in the process of peacebuilding. Their presence must also be an instrument for building trust, not only in the Verification Mission, but more importantly among all the actors involved in reintegration and the provision of security guarantees. The current Mission has been able to preserve confidence and cooperation in the face of a multiplicity of incidents, that could have undermined the basic level of collaboration required for the consolidation of peace. The Verification Mission will seek to maintain that high level of confidence and cooperation.

51. In conclusion, let me reiterate my appreciation to the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP for entrusting the United Nations with the new task of helping to ensure that the end of the conflict is indeed stable and lasting. In his letter of 5 June 2017, the President of Colombia expressed confidence that the firm support of the United Nations would be instrumental in ensuring that the peace process in Colombia would continue to be implemented as agreed between the parties and would reach a successful conclusion. Through the Verification Mission and the activities of the members of the United Nations country team in Colombia, the United Nations will make every effort to ensure that the peace process in Colombia meets its ambitious goals, and in doing so, continues to inspire other countries to follow the path of peaceful conflict resolution.